



# SOBERING CENTER

SERVING AUSTIN & TRAVIS COUNTY

#TheSoberingCenter

#BeSafeBeSoberATX

# What is a Sobering Center?

Sobering Centers are public facilities where people can safely recover from acute intoxication; offering a safe place for high risk substance users to sober.

Sobering Centers are utilized as an alternative to jail and emergency rooms.



# What is the Mission of the Austin Sobering Center?

The Sobering Center **enhances public health** and safety by providing a safe place for publicly intoxicated individuals to **sober up** as an alternative to the emergency room or jail and, where appropriate, to **provide a bridge to recovery**.

# New Leadership



## ABOUT ME:

- LMSW-AP
- 20 years in social services in public housing, jails, treatment centers
- 10 years non-profit management
- Passion for justice and equity in behavioral health

# Why do we need Sobering Centers?

## Drug and Alcohol Intoxication: First Responding Agencies (2012 Data)

- 35% of all arrests by APD were for crimes related to alcohol and/or drug abuse.
- Travis County EMS estimated that alcohol was included in the primary impression for 2,662 transports which took 2,717 hours of ambulance time or 113 workdays.
- EMS identified 2,951 patients for whom alcohol or drug abuse was the primary issue



# Why do we need Sobering Centers?

## Band-Aiding the Issue in Jails

- Travis County Sheriff's Office estimates that 720 of their 1,200 Jail residents meet the criteria for substance abuse or dependence.
  - Approximately 450 residents solely meeting dependency criteria.
- Sobering Center has a current capacity of 10 beds due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- The need for intervention and referrals to additional services is critical and would serve as a long-term investment to decrease the amount of people with substance use disorder in jails.



# Why do we need Sobering Centers?

- Public intoxication is a **crime** resulting in thousands of jail bookings a year.
  - Since the inception of the Sobering Center, jail bookings have decreased by 36.5% for the same period this time last year.

Bookings	PI-C Only	Weekly Average	change +/-
Oct 2016-Sep 2017	2175	41.8	
Oct 2017-Sep 2018	1760	33.8	- 19.1%
Oct 2018-Sep 2019	1119	22	- 36.5%

# Sobering Center of Austin

- No jail or emergency room
- No citations, fines, or medical bills
- No cost for Sobering Center services
- Open 24 hours/7 days a week
- Complete confidentiality
  - We do not notify anyone of a client's admission into the center without consent
- Connection to community resources and other services
- Assistance with coordinating transportation home





# Admission Criteria



- 18 years or older
- Suspected alcohol or drug intoxication
- No evidence of acute head injury
- No untreated lacerations
- No seizure within the last 24 hours
- No acute gastrointestinal bleeding
- No evidence of suicidal ideations/  
homicidal ideation or attempt in the  
last 48 hours



# Numbers Served

The Sobering Center has completed over **3,900 intakes** since its inception.

# Who We Serve

Race	%
White	49.37
African Americans	10.27
Hispanic	34.43
Asian	1.33
Middle Eastern	0.05
Other	3.92
Native American	0.59
Total	99.96

Gender	%
Male	74.1
Female	25.9
Total	100

Ages	%
18-24	22.92
25-39	46.52
40-54	21.07
55-64	8
65+	1.46
Total	99.97

Homeless	%
	20.36

# SBERING CENTER

Client is referred/  
transported to  
the Sobering  
Center by Law  
Enforcement,  
EMS or other  
referral partner

NO P.I. CITATION  
NO FINES

Intake Medics  
do a screening  
to ensure it's  
safe for the  
client to sober  
up in our facility

Recovery  
Support  
Specialists  
monitor the  
client and  
continue to  
assess their  
needs

SBIRT  
Counselors  
conduct an  
assessment  
used to link a  
client to the  
appropriate  
community  
resources

# Changes to the Business Model

- APD and EMS no longer the only paths to the Sobering Center
- Patients are now able to 'hold over' for services
- Puddy in the cracks of a broken system
- Outcomes of 'hold over' pilot thus far

# Thank you City Council!

- The Sobering Center was in development for many years, and the community deserves this asset!
- Special shout out to **Stephanie Hayden** and City of Austin HHS Staff for flexibility in program and budget!
- Special shout out to **CM Kathie Tovo**, instrumental in its formation and steadfast in her service on the board!

# S<sup>o</sup>BERING CENTER

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